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FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9692  
INFO RUEHLMC/MILLENIUM CHALLENGE CORP WASHDC  
RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1125

UNCLAS COTONOU 000534

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE  
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DEPT FOR AF/W (D. BANKS)  
PARIS FOR D'ELIA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KCOR](#) [KMCA](#) [BN](#)

SUBJECT: BENIN: PRESIDENT YAYI ORGANIZES AND LEADS A MARCH AGAINST  
CORRUPTION

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: On July 16, President Boni Yayi led a march and rally against corruption through downtown Cotonou. Government officials and persons from all sectors of civil society took part in the event, which was not announced in advance and which took the public and press by surprise. This is the first time in anyone's memory that an event like this has taken place in Benin. END  
SUMMARY

¶2. (U) Late in the afternoon of Monday, July 16, 2007, President Boni Yayi, along with ministers from his government, civil service personnel, and persons from various sectors of civil society took part in what was termed a march against corruption. The eight-kilometer march began and ended at the Presidency building, and at one point passed within a block of the American Embassy. During the march, the crowd grew as passers-by joined in to express their support for the President's anti-corruption initiative. While there have been no official estimates of the crowd, eyewitnesses estimate it at between five hundred and a thousand people.

¶3. (U) At the end of the march, President Yayi addressed the marchers at the Presidency building. In his remarks, he thanked the marchers for taking part, and for their support for his anti-corruption initiative. The following is an excerpt from his remarks: "I thank you for joining me on this march, which symbolizes our common determination to combat corruption. It shows that you have chosen to follow the path of integrity, and to strengthen the culture of democracy which our people support."

¶4. (U) The event received extensive and generally positive media coverage. While a few commentators dismissed the march as a publicity stunt, most emphasized the strong psychological and symbolic impact of President Yayi's personal leadership of the march. The event was yet another opportunity for President Yayi to demonstrate his personal commitment to combating corruption.

DIFFILY